their parents. What can be more horrid to the imagina­tion, than to suppose a father leading the dearest of all his sons to such an infernal shrine ; or a mother the most en­gaging and affectionate of her daughters, just rising to ma­turity, to be slaughtered at the altar of Ashtaroth or Baal ? Justin describes this unnatural custom very pathetically :

“ Quippe homines, ut victimas, immolabant ; et impuberes (quæ ætas hostium misericordiam provocat)aris admovebant, pacem sanguine eorum exposcentes, pro quorum vita Dii ro­gari maxime solent.” Such was their blind zeal, that this was continually practised ; and so much of natural affection still left unextinguished, as to render the scene ten times more shocking, from the tenderness which they seemed to ex­press. They embraced their children with great fondness, and encouraged them in the gentlest terms, that they might not be appalled at the sight of the hellish process, begging of them to submit with cheerfulness to this fearful opera­tion. If there was any appearance of a tear rising, or a cry unawares escaping, the mother smothered it with her kisses, that there might not be any show of backwardness or constraint, but the whole might be a free-will offering. These cruel endearments being over, they stabbed them to the heart, or otherwise opened the sluices of life ; and with the blood warm as it ran, besmeared the altar and the grim visage of the idol. These were the customs which the Is­raelites learned of the people of Canaan, and for which they are upbraided by the Psalmist. “ They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them ; but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works ; yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto de­vils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan ; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a-whoring with their own inventions.”

These cruel rites, which were practised in so many nations, made Plutarch debate with himself, “ Whether it would not have been better for the Galatæ, or for the Scythians, to have had no tradition or conception of any superior being, than to have formed to themselves notions of gods who de­lighted in the blood of men ; of gods who esteemed human victims the most acceptable and perfect sacrifice ? Would it not,” says he, “ have been more eligible for the Carthaginians to have had the atheist Critias, or Diagoras, their lawgiver, at the commencement of their polity, and to have been taught that there was neither god nor demon, than to have sacrificed, in the manner they were wont, to the god which they adored ?” In this they acted, not as the person did whom Empedocles describes in some poetry, where he ex­poses this unnatural custom. The sire there, with many idle vows, offers up unwittingly his son for a sacrifice ; but the youth was so changed in feature and in figure that his father did not know him. These people used knowingly and wilfully to go through this bloody work, and slaughter their own offspring. Even they who were childless would not be exempted from this cursed tribute ; but purchased children of the poorer sort, and put them to death with as little remorse as one would kill a lamb or a chicken. The mother who sacrificed her child stood by, without any seem­ing sense of what she was losing, and without uttering a groan. If a sigh did by chance escape, she lost all the ho­nour which she proposed to herself in the offering, and the child was notwithstanding slain. All the time of this cere­mony, whilst the children were murdering, there was a noise of clarions and tabors sounding before the idol, that the cries and shrieks of the victims might not be heard. “ Tell me now,” says Plutarch, “ if the monsters of old, the Typhons and the giants, were to expel the gods, and to rule the world in their stead, could they require a service more horrid than these infernal rites and sacrifices ?”

SACRILEGE, Sacrulegium, the crime of profaning sa­

cred things, or things devoted to God ; or of alienating to laymen, for common purposes, what was given to religious persons and pious uses.

SACRISTAN, a church-officer, otherwise called sexton. SACRISTY, in *Ecclesiastical History,* an apartment in a church where the sacred utensils were kept.

SADDUCEES were a famous sect among the ancient Jews, and consisted of persons of great quality and opulence. Respecting their origin there are various accounts and va­rious opinions. Epiphanius, and after him many other wri­ters, contend that they took their rise from Dositheus, a sectary of Samaria, and derived their name from the He­brew word צרק, *just* or *justice,* from the great justice and equity which they showed in all their actions ; a derivation which neither suits the word Sadducee nor the general cha­racter of the sect. They are thought by some, too, to have been Samaritans. But this is by no means probable, as they always attended the worship and sacrifices at Jerusa­lem, and never at Gerizim.

In the Jewish Talmud, we are told that the Sadducees derived their name from Sadoc, and that the sect arose about 260 years before Christ, in the time of Antigonus of Socho, president of the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, and teacher of the law in the principal divinity school of that city. An­tigonus had often in his lectures, it seems, taught his scho­lars that they ought not to serve God as slaves do their masters, from the hopes of a reward, but merely out of filial love for his own sake ; and from this Sadoc and Baithus inferred that there were no rewards at all after this life. They therefore separated from their master, and taught that there was no resurrection nor future state. This new doctrine quickly spread, and gave rise to the sect of Sad­ducees, which in many respects resembled the Epicureans.

Dr Prideaux thinks that the Sadducees were at first no more than what the Caraitcs are now ; that is, they would not receive the traditions of the elders, but acknowledged the written word only ; and the Pharisees being great pro­moters of those traditions, these two sects hence became directly opposite to each other.

Afterwards the Sadducees imbibed other doctrines, which rendered them a sect truly impious. They denied the re­surrection of the dead, and the existence of angels, and the spirits or souls of men departed. They held that there is no spiritual being but God only ; and that as to man, this world is his all. They did not deny but that we had reasonable souls ; but they maintained that this soul was mortal, and, by a necessary consequence, they denied the rewards and pun­ishments of another life. They pretended also, that what is said of the existence of angels and of a future resurrection is nothing but illusions. St Epiphanius, and after him St Augustin, have advanced, that the Sadducees denied the Holy Ghost. But neither Josephus nor the evangelists ac­cuse them of any error like this. It has been also imputed to them, that they thought God corporeal, and that they received none of the prophecies.

It is difficult to apprehend how they could deny the be­ing of angels, and yet receive the books of Moses, where such frequent mention is made of angels and of their ap­pearances. Grotius and Le Clerc observe, that it is very likely they l∞ked upon angels, not as particular beings, sub­sisting of themselves, but as powers, emanations, or quali­ties, inseparable from the Deity, as the sunbeams are inse­parable from the sun. Or, perhaps, they held angels not to be spiritual, but mortal, just as they thought that substance to be which animates us and thinks in us. The ancients do not tell us how they solved this difficulty, that might be urged against them from so many passages of the Penta­teuch, where mention is made of angels.

As the Sadducees acknowledgcd neither punishments nor recompenses in another life, so they were inexorable in chastising the wicked. They observed the law themselves,